

*Appointment and Instructions.*

His Majesty's Government having decided to withdraw all British troops from the northern front, I received, on August 2nd, instructions to proceed to North Russia, and on my arrival assume command of the British and Allied troops operating in that theatre.

The intention of H.M. Government, as communicated to me, was the withdrawal of all British troops before the winter set in.

The evacuation of all Allied troops would take place at the same time.

My special task was to co-ordinate the movements of General Ironside and General Maynard on their respective fronts in co-operation with the Senior Naval Officer of the White Sea Fleet, who, though not under my command, would endeavour to meet my requirements as far as the exigencies of the service permitted.

The North Russian Government having expressed the intention of maintaining themselves and their troops after the departure of the Allied forces, I was authorised to afford them all possible assistance compatible with the safety of the British and Allied troops and the arrangements necessary for their timely evacuation.

With this object in view I was at liberty to co-operate with the troops under my command in such operations as the North Russian forces might undertake, and which, in my opinion, were calculated to achieve their purpose and facilitate my withdrawal. I was further authorised to hand over, at my discretion, military equipment, arms, ammunition, stores and supplies to the North Russian Government before my departure.

*Departure.*

I left England on August 4th for the North Russian front.

*Summary of Military Situation on North Russian Front.*

At the date of my departure, military operations in North Russia were being conducted by independent commanders in two distinct theatres separated from each other by the White Sea. These theatres will for convenience be called the Murmansk front and the Archangel front.

(a) *Murmansk Front.*

On this front a Composite Force, under the command of Major-General Sir C. C. M. Maynard, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., consisting roughly of 7,000 Allied troops (5,000 being British) and 9,000 local levies, was in occupation of the ice-free ports of Peohenga and Murmansk, and guarded a long line of communication extending south along the Murman railway through the White Sea ports of Kandalaksha and Kem as far as the northern extremity of Lake Onega, where a short and strong front was held.

The enemy forces were estimated to number some 5,800 men, and occupied a position astride the railway in the area between Lakes Onega and Ladoga. They were based on Petrozavodsk and Petrograd.

Little activity had been shown on this front throughout the winter, but General Maynard had gradually eaten his way forward during the early summer, until he was able from his positions in the neighbourhood

of Kyapaselga to threaten Petrozavodsk, whence an advance on Petrograd presented no great difficulties.

The country in which our front line was now established was admirably adapted for defensive purposes. Further, the inhabitants displayed distinct anti-Bolshevik tendencies, so that the danger of a successful advance northward on the part of the enemy, even if attempted at all, was extremely remote.

The chief difficulty which confronted General Maynard on this front was the adequate protection with the small number of troops at his disposal of the single line of railway which formed the main communication with his base at Murmansk some 500 miles distant.

(b) *Archangel Front.*

On this front Major-General Sir W. E. Ironside, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., commanded an Anglo-Russian Force of approximately 37,000 troops, of whom 13,000 were British, and was opposed by the Bolshevik Sixth Army, the strength of which was roughly 33,000.

The area occupied by General Ironside's force, the headquarters of which were at Archangel, stretched from Onega on the White Sea, Obozerskaya on the Archangel-Vologda railway, Seletskoe on the Yemtsa River, Kitskaya on the Vaga, Troitsa on the Dvina to Pinega due east of Archangel on the Pinega River.

Owing to the physical features of the country, which consisted almost entirely either of virgin forest or long stretches of impassable peaty swamp, locally termed "tundra," operations had been confined to the districts bordering the River Dvina and its tributaries, and astride the Archangel-Vologda railway, which further provided the only practical means of communication.

The Dvina is a large river, navigable for 300 miles up as far as Kotlas, and with an average breadth of about one mile. Its tributaries on which operations were taking place were:—

(a) The Yemtsa, which is crossed by the Archangel-Vologda railway about 20 miles north of Plesetskaya, and flows north-east, joining the Dvina 100 miles from Archangel.

(b) The Vaga, which flows due north through Shenkursk into the Dvina 50 miles above the Yemtsa.

(c) The Pinega, which flows due west from Pinega town and joins the right bank of the Dvina 50 miles from Archangel.

The Allied forces on this front had experienced some difficulty during the winter months in maintaining their positions against the Bolshevik attacks, but the arrival in June of Generals Grogan's and Sadleir-Jackson's brigades not only stabilised the situation, but placed General Ironside in a position to deal the enemy a severe blow as and when the opportunity should occur. The value of the presence in North Russia of these reliable troops was felt when in July two serious mutinies broke out.

The first of these occurred at Troitsa on the Dvina River on July 7th among two companies of the 1st Battalion of the Slav-British Legion, recruited originally from